

WELLINGTON (SALOP) URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.INTERIM REPORT ON THE HEALTH AND SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE URBAN DISTRICT OF WELLINGTON FOR THE YEAR 1942.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Once again the Ministry of Health has required that the Report on the Health of the District shall be presented in an abbreviated interim form. This being so, exhaustive statistical figures have been avoided and such as are given have been confined to those of a domestic nature and of local interest.

Infectious disease has been dealt with in the relevant section of this Report, but here it can be noticed the comparative freedom from all infectious disease and, in particular, that of a graver nature. Diphtheria was almost completely absent, and there were few cases of Scarlet Fever.

Over the country generally, despite War conditions and the stringency of the times, acute infective diseases have shown little or no rise, with the exception of Cerebro-Spinal Fever, a disease from which this District suffered two cases. It may be, however, that that condition associated with the maintenance of the good health of a country - cleanliness - has shown some deterioration. The frequency of Scabies seems to denote a lack of this, and Scabies has been much in the mind in the past twelve months. Turning to that more chronic infective condition - Tuberculosis - over the Country there has been a rise following a pre-war decline which had been continuous from the end of the War of 1914/1918. In some measure to meet this a system of Mass Radiography has been evolved. To expedite the examination of patients and, at the same time, to bring within the scope of preventive medicine a large section of adolescence and young adults (the 20-30 age group), a system of X-ray photography has been invented which should be the means of bringing to light many unsuspected cases. By this system of mass X-ray examination, the time should not be far distant when every adult will be subjected to this type of examination at the period of greatest susceptibility. The relationship of this disease to your District is dealt with at the end of this Report.

To combat and take further preventive measures, the Ministry of Health has made arrangements to deal with the possible onset and spread of Typhus Fever - a disease from which this Country is now completely free. The danger of this gaining a foothold lies in the large proportion of our population at present abroad returning to this Country and, coupled with this, the rapid means for that return. The Continent has not enjoyed this same freedom from Typhus, and the danger is thereby emphasised.

Veneral Disease has shown an unwelcomed increase in frequency, and has been much discussed. To further prevention, certain measures have been taken by Parliament to restrict, principally, the infected female being a cause for

further spread, and it is now possible to deal with such cases compulsorily on report. Much diversity of opinion exists as to the relative weight to be given to medical and moral teachings in attempting to secure eradication.

Smallpox, an infrequent and undesired visitor, has evidenced itself at periods in the year. Scotland has been mainly affected; only rare cases have occurred on this side of the Border, and no epidemics have arisen.

A precautionary measure, new in so far as to its general applicability to this County, has had to be taken in relation to static water supplies. This one of the protective weapons used in the defence of the Country is, by reason of its nature, a possible breeding ground for mosquitoes. The steps to prevent this have been the subject of a memorandum from the Ministry of Health.

Preventive Medicine has become a State Controlled Branch of the Science and, during the year, much conjecture and publicity have been given to the possibility of making Medicine generally under this same control, in a socialised form. The opening of Health Centres to deal with all diseases, with attendant Doctors and Specialists as required, is envisaged and, while it would appear that some form of Service of this nature will result, the shape and scope has still to be agreed and decided. Complementary with the above, the status of those Servants of Medicine - Nurses - has received much consideration, and the result has been the stabilisation of their system of working and remuneration.

In the immediate neighbourhood, particular attention has been directed to the need for a higher standard of cleanliness in Milk. In this connection preliminary steps have been taken, in association with the Local Agricultural College, to formulate a scheme for local sampling. It is hoped that by this means it may be possible to eradicate that substratum of milk producers who are at present supplying a liquid of an inferior standard of cleanliness.

It is pleasing to note that, as a result of the special care and supervision of the diet of children, there have been no adverse effects on the health and weight, as a result of the War. Among the people generally, better use is being made of the more ordinary foods in the home, and it has been found possible to live satisfactorily on the restricted rations now in force. The lessening of Neurosis reported over the Country has been ascribed to persons being more occupied and busy, and free from the fear of unemployment.

In the Public Health Department, it was found that the duties, many of them a result of emergency calls, necessitated the allocation of additional assistance. To meet this, an Assistant was appointed to work under the supervision of your Officer.

The Medical Officer of Health takes this opportunity of thanking your Sanitary Inspector for his close co-operation and ever-ready willingness in carrying out the work of the Department.

POPULATION:

The increase in normal population of the District still remains high, with very little variation from that

appertaining to 1941. The number of official evacuees has not increased and no large establishments have been commenced in this District, but in the adjoining Districts the establishing of camps and factories has resulted in demands being made upon Wellington for the accommodation of war workers, contractors' workmen, and the wives drafted to this area. The cottage type of house, Council houses and the like, are still the type of accommodation most useful and most used for the lodging of this excess population, and considerable difficulty has been found in obtaining voluntary billets for official evacuees. This pressure has remained fairly constant, and no large numbers of war workers, transferred to factories in adjoining Districts, have been required to be billeted in Wellington. Such numbers that have been transferred have occurred sporadically and, with the exception of one or two cases, have found accommodation without difficulty. No sanitary or medical difficulties have arisen directly from persons living in lodgings, but domestic differences, due to members of different families living in close proximity over a period of time, have been the subject of investigation and, in one case, of appeal. Any further large influx of persons into this area would undoubtedly put great strain on the already overburdened public services, and this point, apart from the question of available accommodation, should be carefully borne in mind. The increased demands of the Government upon the population for the carrying out of war work, also reflects on the difficulty of maintaining domestic arrangements in houses best suited for billeting purposes.

Certain figures and statistics supplied by the Ministry of Health are :-

	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>
Live births	102	105
Illegitimate births	4	8
Still births	4	3
Deaths under one year of age ...	9	
	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>
Deaths (generally)	53	60

Some causes of death :-

Pulmonary tuberculosis	2
Non " "	1
Cancer	14
Heart Disease	23
Cerebral hæmorrhage	13
Pneumonia	3

There were no deaths from acute infective (notifiable) disease.

BACTERIOLOGICAL SERVICE:

This continues to be carried out by the County Bacteriologist, Dr. Rhodes, at the Royal Salop Infirmary at Shrewsbury. The centralisation in this Hospital is now complete and the whole works satisfactorily.

SCAVENGING:

The old method of collection in the Town was by means of three or four carts - horse drawn - and in the present day this has been replaced by the use of a motor lorry, and of a horse and cart in places near to the tipping centre and where access to property is narrow and restricted. To speed up collection, more service men would have to accompany the lorry, and these would also be necessary should the horse and cart, now in use, be discontinued. The aim is a weekly round, with bi-weekly service to canteens and certain businesses. While it is appreciated that the difficulty, in these days, of obtaining sanitary dustbins is very great, the use of odd receptacles as refuse containers retards the work and necessitates additional time being spent on the individual houses. In addition to refuse, salvage is also collected, and this service has been so systematised that, from observation, it would seem that the townsfolk are salvage conscious and allow little to pass to the dustbins which might be used for purposes of recovery.

DISINFESTATION:

Where articles of clothing have been delivered to the Wellington Institution for cleansing, from time to time, the calls in this part were rarely many as the major portion of such disinfestation and disinfection concerned the association with tuberculous cases. However, with the advent of Scabies, the disinfector at the Institution has been much more in demand, and full use has been made of the limited facilities at the disposal of the Authority.

PUBLIC SWIMMING BATHS:

The two baths open to the public have had samples of their waters submitted for analysis and, while one has given reasonably satisfactory reports, the other, under the town control, has had less favourable commendation. So much has this been the case that it was found necessary to request consideration of the installation of a regulation system of chlorination to replace the present, less accurate, means of disinfection. Summary reports on this subject were made to the Council and, with the present difficulty of securing plant, irrespective of increased cost of installation, it has been impossible to move in the matter. Nevertheless, the deficiencies of hygiene in the baths continues to be present and, as soon as conditions permit, this problem must be faced. Full use has been made of the facilities for bathing in the slipper baths, and the buildings have now been adapted for use as a cleansing station. Both the swimming baths mentioned above are kept full of water during the winter months as a source of bulk water available for the Fire Fighting Services.

SEWAGE AND DISPOSAL:

The Surveyor reported at the end of the Year that the Town's Disposal Scheme, at Admaston, was working satisfactorily. At these Works repairs and reconditioning have been carried out where necessary, and it has been found essential to replace a pump for the distribution of sludge to the lagoons. A full use is made of any spare ground adjoining this plant, and a very satisfactory crop of potatoes was lifted in the Autumn. While it has not been found possible to undertake any large extensions of the sewage system, a connection has been made with Apley Park to meet the needs

of a local establishment. The Sanitary Inspector has made a survey of certain property in the Area and, as a result, has required the reconditioning and renewing of faulty sanitary conveniences. The disrepair of these has been noted particularly in condemned property, and the close supervision of such class of home is necessary if a reasonable degree of general hygiene is to be maintained. Again, the Sanitary Inspector has interested himself in the preparation of plans to meet the possibility of war-time damage to these sanitary services, and has advised the Council on the steps necessary and the provision to be made in the event of such damage occurring.

Lavatories for public use at Queen Street have been erected and this has met an urgent need in this part of the town. The Council are aware that the whole system of public conveniences requires drastic overhauling, and the time only prevents this from being carried out now.

WATER SUPPLY:

Where, under normal conditions, expansion of these sources and supplies would be a first consideration, the impossibility of any enlargement now, even with the present limitations of quantity, necessitates the closest supervision and the co-operation with neighbouring Water Undertakings to give a sufficiency to those on the distributory system. Advances have, indeed, been made to the Ministry of Health, but have been unavailing. At present there is a constant approach to giving that adequate supply necessary in a town with modern conveniences, and this attainment has been achieved, but only with difficulty.

The daily average consumption showed a rise on that of 1941, and now totals more than half a million gallons. At times, to conserve the supply and to give a sufficiency in the working hours, it has been found necessary to stop distribution for a period during night. This practice was followed chiefly in the Autumn of the Year. The total, above mentioned, has also been stabilised by supplementing from the Wellington Rural and Oakengates Councils who, at the end of the Year, were passing 30,000 and 20,000 gallons daily, respectively, into the town's mains. These augmentations from the Wellington Rural and Oakengates Districts were the material results of a series of meetings of the three Authorities. As a result of the discussions, in the Trench Area it was found possible to give an increased flow from Donnington through the Oakengates mains at Trench and by a linkage on this boundary with Hadley, where this Town gives service in this last Area. The whole was improved by the installation of a booster plant near Donnington, this increasing pressure and volume of supply. Again, in the Ketley Area the Oakengates Council were able to supplement the Urban District's service and give improved supplies and, at the same time, the Hadley Area again benefited through this connection by being able to receive an additional quantity of water flowing by gravitation from this higher Area. At the extreme range of the water distribution it was found that a farm and certain adjoining cottages were suffering from a shortage which the town felt unable to overcome. By arrangement with the Wellington Rural Council it was found possible to secure a linkage with that Authority's main, and the difficulty was thus surmounted.

While the Council have been unable to put into practice any scheme or expansion, deliberations have taken place on the possibilities for the future, and consideration has been given to the laying of a 10" main from the Donnington Waterworks (Wellington R.D.C.) through the village of Preston to Leegomery, and so to the Town's mains at the Hadley boundary. Beyond the contemplation of this extension, no steps have been taken.

From time to time the emergency services have made calls on the Town for additional supplies and, associated with this, was the provision made for the Apley Park Area.

The centres at the Wrekin and at Woodfield Pumping Station have been closely supervised, and repairs and reconditioning have been carried out where necessary. The pumping main from the Woodfield Station developed a bad fracture which adversely affected supply to the covered reservoir, and this faulty section of piping had to be cut out and replaced.

The whole of the Town's water supply are subjected to frequent analyses, and have been found to give uniformly good results. In addition, a system for chlorination of the water is in operation.

HOUSING:

Concern has been felt in this District over the inability to maintain and repair property; this on account of the restrictions imposed on the use of material and labour. In an effort to meet the calls for housing and to reduce the number of families living in overcrowded and insanitary homes, a meeting was held with the Principal Regional Medical Officer from Birmingham. The possibility of the erection of a housing community, of temporary construction, was discussed. As it was felt that hutments of the nature suggested would be difficult to obtain, and as labour was so extremely scanty, it was decided that successful completion of a scheme of this type would be problematical.

Arising out of a request by the Council to the Ministry of Health for permission to erect some houses to meet the needs of urgent and necessitous cases, and asking them to hold an Enquiry of certain Local Authorities, a meeting was arranged between a Sub-Committee of the Council and the Local Member of Parliament, when the urgency of the housing situation was fully discussed.

There has been one application for grant under the Housing (Rural Workers) Act.

The frequency of notice of Scabies and the subsequent examination of the homes of persons concerned, brought to light the existence of other skin diseases of a contagious nature and, in many instances, evidences of household neglect. This insight into family life prompted your Sanitary Inspector to report on the need for a system of welfare supervision of the tenants, particularly of Council houses. This matter was dealt with at some length, and the question of the appointment of a person on the lines of an Estates Manager was fully considered. This appointment has been held over for a time, but the Council are fully alive to the needs and possibility of such a charge being made.

Cases of overcrowding and bad sanitation have come to notice, and every effort has been made to relieve the conditions prevailing. This has been by no means easy with the present local congestion, and also as the disrepair found has in many instances been associated with homes scheduled for clearance. This task has not been simplified with many owners unwilling to co-operate.

The Council have had, on occasion, notices of movable dwellings being brought into the Area and settlement made without sanction being obtained from the Public Health Department. Such cases have been treated with sympathy and understanding of the needs of these temporary dwellers who are, in many instances, subject to movement of place of employment on short notice. The first aim of the Authority had been to see that no nuisance is created, and a reasonable standard of sanitation is maintained.

The two Common Lodging Houses have been licensed again.

While the winter was extremely mild, one of the few falls of snow created difficulties at the Arlestone Housing Estate. By reason of the exposure, snow drifted between the roof tiles and, on melting, resulted in damage to ceilings. This damage, with the labour shortage, took some time to repair. This Estate is now well established, and the roads to the housing have been finished.

Up to early in this year the Sanitary Inspector was obliged, in addition to the duties of his Department, to act as Billeting Officer. It then became apparent that this exacting work, with its many calls, required individual attention, and it was found possible to appoint an Officer to take entire charge for all such applications for lodgings. By this arrangement the work of the Department has benefited greatly.

MEAT AND FOODS:

The District continues to be served from the Central Abattoir at Shrewsbury, and any local inspection of such meat is carried out by your Sanitary Inspector. In the Town, there are two Bacon Factories and one Casualty Slaughterhouse. The carcasses are examined at the Factories on certain days of the week, and at the Casualty Centre on notice being received.

Licences to slaughter have been granted on the recommendation of your Officer.

With the governing local bye-laws in abeyance, applications have been received from persons desirous of keeping pigs in the Urban Area. These applications have received every consideration and, apart from requirements as to numbers to be kept and the housing of the animals, no restraint has been exerted.

Visits of inspection are made to the local Market Hall - averaging about once per week - and this type of selling is generally supervised.

From time to time goods have been brought for examination as to their quality and, in certain instances, articles have had to be condemned and confiscated. These foods comprised mainly tinned goods and a quantity of jam.

As a matter of public interest, the Sanitary Inspector made a lengthy report on the canning of food, with special reference to bacterial content and the points to be searched for as a guide in assessing the wholesomeness of such food.

Arrangements have been made in the Town to deal with gas contaminated foodstuffs, and regular meetings have been held in the evenings to instruct the squad recruited in the routine of their duties.

In association with Sanitary Inspectors of Neighbouring Authorities, a demonstration on improvised cooking was attended. This was held in local Army establishments, and the talks were given by the Officers in charge. The scope of such methods of cooking and the possibility of use in emergency conditions in the Town, were reported to this Council.

MILK AND DAIRIES:

This work, with its dual control, has devolved less on the District Authority since the onset of War. This has been due mainly on account of the difficulty in effecting repairs and improvements. Despite this, in this area the supply of pure milk from farms with a reasonable standard of hygiene has been the expectation, and any farms falling below the average standard have been required to exert themselves to produce under better conditions. Full reports on the methods of milking and storage, together with the findings, on the farm buildings and general sanitation have been, in certain cases, required, and steps have been taken to see that any deficiency of the above nature has been eliminated.

Much publicity has been given to the need for an increased consumption of milk among infants and school children. During the course of school milk inspection, it was found that a supply was being delivered which on certain inspections was found to be bad, and to have little or no keeping qualities. On a change of supply, no further complaints of this description have been received.

With a view to improving the cleanliness of milk, particularly among a class of dairy farmer holding small stock and deficient in modern hygienic facilities, conversations were held with the Milk Officer from the local Agricultural College. Subsequent to these conversations, a meeting was held in Shrewsbury, where a large contingent of the War Agricultural Committee, together with others interested, met the local Sanitary Inspectors. This meeting, and the conversations, fully discussed the possibility of eliminating the low standard of cleanliness in milk by a system of sampling, with subsequent bacteriological examination. While this work has been in progress in some other Counties for some months, it has been found that it has not been possible to proceed beyond discussion in Shropshire on account of shortage of equipment.

FACTORIES:

Factories and workshops have been inspected from time to time, and the requirements of the Act enforced. The Home Office asked that surveys and issue of certificates in respect of means of escape from fire be resumed, and this has now been completed with regard to this District.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE:

As in 1941, the total number of notifications was limited, and the District again enjoyed a year of comparative freedom.

Measles was almost completely absent - one case only occurring in the Spring, the remainder of the period being free.

Whooping Cough. Thirtythree (33) cases were notified, much the same number as in the preceding year. Those notifications were spread very evenly over the twelve months.

Diphtheria. Again there was almost complete absence from this dangerous disease; two cases were brought to notice, and there was no connection between the attacks.

This satisfactory state of affairs can be credited to the results of the intensive campaign for protecting the child population by immunisation; that group most susceptible. A large proportion of children under 16 years have taken full benefit of the facilities offered, which are given to all free; no class distinction being made. It has been more difficult to control the infant group, as this entails much visiting of the homes and an exhaustive total of those in the District is difficult to obtain. However, through the efforts of your Sanitary Inspector, and concentrated visitation of the mothers by the local Health Visitors, much has been done to make the parents diphtheria conscious and to induce them to bring their children to the Centres for protective treatment.

It had been the practice for the Local Authority to control the administration of this diphtheria immunisation in its entirety, but a change was made in this in May, the County Health Department taking over the clinical side of this work. This change was made with a view to bringing into the scheme certain Authorities who, up to that time, had shown themselves to be lacking in initiative and enterprise. The Local Authorities still continued to hold themselves responsible for the statistics of the work done, and to furnish bi-annual returns to the Ministry of Health. At the end of the Year the returns showed that 39% of children under 5 years, and 79% of children over that age, had taken advantage of this scheme.

Scarlet Fever. Little change was noticed in the number of notifications received. There was a total of 8 cases, and these were evenly divided over the period and there was no approach to an epidemic experienced.

Pneumonia. This disease gave rise to 9 cases, 6 of which occurred in the colder months of the first Quarter.

Dysentery. This accounted for 6 notifications, a small number for this Area.

Other diseases notified were :-

Puerperal pyrexia	3
Cerebro-spinal fever	2
Erysipelas	2
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	2

Scabies. From the commencement of the War, disease of this description has become frequent in the District and, while it presented no peculiar problem, the returns have repeatedly shown its presence. As has been said, up to the beginning of the War no concern has been felt in your Area, but in adjoining Districts great difficulty had been experienced in obtaining treatment for patients so affected. The Wellington Rural and Newport Councils were finally forced to take measures to meet the position and, by joining, were able to inaugurate a Centre at the disused Isolation Hospital at Newport. While this Centre was intended primarily for the use of the two Authorities aforementioned, it was found possible to grant

facilities to neighbouring Councils, and Wellington Urban Council joined in this scheme as an Authority prepared to send in and out patients, but not participating in the Management. From this moment a considerable number of cases were sent and received treatment, and it can be said that once the convenience of the Newport Centre had been established, the frequency of this contagion in the town has been amply demonstrated. At the end of the Year there was a considerable reduction in the cases reported and it was felt that much had been done to reduce the number of new and recurrence of old infections.

Tuberculosis. The numbers on the register at the end of the Year were :-

	<u>Pulmonary.</u>		<u>Non-Pulmonary.</u>	
	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>
1941 ...	39	27	34	51
1942 ...	44	29	35	54

The above shows a slight rise, in keeping with the general trend over the whole Country.

Smallpox. The presence of Smallpox in the Country has moved the County Authority to consider provision for the possibility of an outbreak in Shropshire. With this end in view, it was decided that Steeraway Hospital should be used for the western part of the County, and for further afield if required. Information was given as to the relationship of the Local Authority in this matter, and the steps to be taken to control removal of cases and the disinfection of ambulances.

Acts and steps were taken to see that these requirements received prompt attention. Less difficulty has been experienced since this notice was taken.

Nurse Riley, District Health Visitor, reports as follows :-

Homes visited ...	...	...	...	...	1,432.
Scabies ...	38.	...	...	...	50 visits.
Mumps ...	54.				
German Measles	3.	...	...	...	4 visits.
Influenza .	16.				
Dirty homes	9.	...	...	...	15 visits.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

W.A.M. STEWART.
Medical Officer of Health.

14th August, 1943.